SAMHAIN

FILMS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT

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JASON
FREDDY
SAM HAIN
QUATERMASS
FRANKENSTEIN
THE EVIL DEAD
DARIO ARGENTO
DAVID CRONENBERG
AND MUCH MUCH MORE...





HEEERE'S JOHNNY !

FOR me it all began one August night in 1974 with the showing on BBC1 of Hammer's DRACULA PRINCE OF DARKNESS. I was 12 at the time and prior to then horror films had been taboo (don't forget this was 1974 B.V. Before Video) and there was no way I could get into an "X" certificate movie at the cinema.

I suppose the "Real" world was still suffering from the shock waves caused by the previous year's THE EXORCIST but I was oblivious to this. I had seen my first horror movie and I was hooked.

From then on the thing snowballed (get out of head is probably a better term) and what followed was years of late night TV, endless trips to the cinema and what amounted to a general takeover of my lifestyle (God, I sound like Forrest J. Ackerman)

I've always been an obsessive collector (My Action Man platoon was a veritable army of 36) and in no time I had amassed a small library of horror film books, posters, stills and, with the advent of video, horror films themselves, and I'm eagerly adding to these collections all the time.

But recently I've been feeling the urge to put something back into the genre that's given me such pleasure, and so SAMHAIN was born.

It's very much a labour of love and I'll be the first to admit it was delivered into the world on a very slender shoestring budget but I believe that with your help it can grow.

If, after reading this issue, you don't like it then don't just chuck it in the bin. Write to me and let me know what you didn't like about it, or better still, write the sort of thing you'd like to see from a horror film fanzine yourself, send it to me, and I'll do my best to use it.

SAMHAIN isn't about one particular sub-genre of the horror film, it's about the genre as a whole (and I've no doubt that on occasion we'll be delving into the worlds of science fiction and fantasy) everything and anything from the 1910 FRANKENSTEIN to Ken Russell's GOTHIC although I've got a sneaky feeling that knowing the contributors you're going to be reading quite a bit about the likes of Dario Argento and of course the notorious video nasties.

My own personal preferences lie with the Hammer films of the fifties and sixties and the old Universal classics but then each to his or her own. I'm also keen on expanding the coverage of genre material on TV as there are many people out there like myself who are going to be introduced to the genre through the medium of television.

Something else I'm keen on is a regular film adaptation in comic strip form and I'm indebted to Richard Floyd-Walker for part one of his EVIL DEAD adaptation. Although still at school I think his work displays a highly original style quite suited to Sam Raimi's now legendary film. But what do you the reader think?

There's not much point in a bunch of us slaving away here writing stuff that nobody wants to read so let me know what you'd like to see in SAMHAIN or just write anyway.

Through the course of getting SAMHAIN together I've made a lot of great new friends and needless to say we all have an awful lot in common.

Oh, by the way, about the title. Donald Pleasence nearly got it right in HALLOWEEN II. It's a Celtic word meaning festival of the dead and is actually November 1. It also marks the end of the Celtic year so in effect I should be wishing you happy new year!

Seasons you'll be seeing a lot of in these pages is Sam Hain (The Headed One) and his sidekick Bom-Ba-Peep. At the moment we're working on a page three pin up of Sam to offer an alternative to those you may have come across of another well-known Sam!

SAMHAIN issue two will be on sale in January hopefully with our first letters page so get writing and until then I'll bid you Happy New Year, Happy Christmas, good viewing, good reading and pleasant dreams!

John Gullidge

John Gullidge (November 1986)

Now back to my novel . . . All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy all work



IT'S A CELTIC WORD, SAMHAIN, IT MEANS THE LORD OF THE DEAD, THE END OF SUMMER, THE FESTIVAL OF SAMHAIN. OCTOBER 31ST...

.....SAMHAIN ISN'T EVIL SPIRITS, IT ISN'T GOBLINS, GHOSTS OR WITCHES, IT'S THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND, WE'RE ALL AFRAID OF THE DARK INSIDE OURSELVES."
Donald Pleasence as Dr. Sam Loomis in HALLOWEEN II.



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SAM HAIN (the hooded one)
By Pam Richards

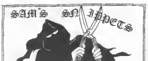
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This issue is dedicated to Pam for being so helpful and supportive and to John who shares my hopes for SAMHAIN and without whom...



WHAT Universal did for horror in the 30's and Hammer did in the 50's and 60's Empire look set to do in the 80's at least in sheer volume if nothing else. And a quick scan through their schedule suggests that director Stuart RE-ANIMATOR Gordon is behind most of them. He has already completed H.P. Lovecraft's FROM BEYOND and the horror thriller DOLLS about a couple of wicked and the seemingly innocent dolls they create. Gordon is also set to direct ROBOJOX (sci-fi) H.P. Lovecraft's LURKING FEAR, BERSERKER (about a bodybuilder with an unusual line in steroids) and for good measure BLOODY BESS. Other interesting titles to expect from Empire include SKELETON, HEADHUNTER, DREAM INVADERS, DECAPITRON, CELLAR DWELLER, JOURNEYS THROUGH THE DARK ZONE, I EAT CANNIBALS, THE PRIMEVALS etc., etc.

AND talking of Empire another interesting project currently in pre-production is APPARATUS written and directed by one Larry Cohen. It's described as "A horrifyingly realistic drama where all control is out of control".

GOOD old Channel 4 managed to dig up David Lynch's four minute short ALPHABET for a recent screening in their Monday night FOUR MINUTES slot and pretty weird it was too. It also served as an appetiser for Lynch's forthcoming BLUE VELVET which sees a return to his ERASERHEAD-style of film making following the abysmal coma-inducing DUNE.

THE best ad-line of the month must surely be the one used for Gerald Cirrorici's GRAVEYARD SHIFT "Lots of people work the graveyard shift ... firemen, waitresses, cops, cab drivers, vampires.....

I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE, I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN and I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF. They don't make 'em like that anymore. Well maybe not but they do name 'em like that still as two forthcoming productions will show: I MARRIED A VAMPIRE directed by Jay Raskin and I WAS A TEENAGE VAMPIRE.

CHRISTOPHER Lee, who once turned his back on horror films as he felt the scripts just weren't good enough, is to star in FIVE BELOW ZERO which begins shooting next month on a budget of 14 million dollars. The star is Richard Hatch who plays an "Irreverent adventurer searching for the world's largest ruby in the Indian jungle." That's what I like, an original storyline.....

I had planned on nominating Leslie Halliwell for the Golden Bog Roll award (see page 9) following his recent comments in the TV Times about Russell Mulcahy's HIGHLANDER. Halliwell, the man who buys films for ITV and Channel 4 and therefore dictates what we see on the box, wrote: "I defy anyone, after sitting through 40 minutes of HIGHLANDER to tell me what it is about. Well if that's the sort of mentality that's choosing our films for us then we've got problems. However Leslie gets himself off the hook thanks to his excellent new book THE DEAD THAT WALK (Grafton £12.95). Anyone who writes a book about the cinematic careers of Dracula, Frankenstein, The Mummy and The Zombie can't be all that bad, especially as he concentrates on the great Universal and Hammer classics. Nice one Leslie. . .

STEVEN Spielberg was one of the lucky (or should that be unlucky) ones who managed to get tickets for Andrew Lloyd Webber's THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA and he liked it so much, so he didn't buy the company, but rumour has it he is interested in doing his own version for the big screen.

AND talking of Spielberg... Just when you thought it was safe... JAWS '87 coming from Universal and produced and directed by Joseph Sargent needless to say with no involvement from Stevie the Boy Wonder. Nevertheless complete with the most original title since JAWS 3 the world's favourite Great White is back, no doubt bigger, nastier, more indestructable and toothier than ever before.

FREDDY'S REVENGE A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 2 failed to live up to anyone's hopes leaving a lot of people wondering if there would be any future for the series. Well money speaks louder than words and although slated by the critics FREDDY'S REVENGE did well enough at the box office to keep the series alive and the good news is that Nightmare's originator Wes Craven has been signed up by New Line Cinema to re-write A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 3 DREAM WARRIORS with Bruce Wagner and the film is also credited as "Produced in association with Wes Craven." What's more Heather Langenkamp is back as Nancy Thompson leading the dream warriors of the title into battle with Freddy. Sounds promising . .

FULL marks to Television South West for unearthing a copy of FRANKENSTEIN THE TRUE STORY in it's original two part American version. Shown over two consecutive Friday's I watched it expecting to see numerous additional scenes but as far as I could make out the only additions to the three hour version shown in the past by the Beeb were a prologue at the start of each part, the first with James Mason in contemporary London and the second comprising of clips from part one accompanied by a narration by Leonard Whiting.. ..

VIDEO turkey of the year must surely be HOWLING II but just when you thought it was safe to go back out in the outback look out for HOWLING III THE MARSUPIALS, which started shooting on location in Oz last month and will be released early next year. I can't wait....

NICE to see the Sweet Transvestite from Transsexual Transylvania back in action. Yes, Frank N. Furter lives, well almost. Tim Curry appeared in Central TV's Halloween special (shown on November 1 of course) entitled THE WORST WITCH. As the Grand Wizard Curry made an all too fleeting appearance singing a song and uttering lines like "I've got to split I've got another gig ". . .

1986 looks like definitely being the year of the zombies. Romero's eagerly awaited DAY OF THE DEAD lived up to everyone's expectations and even good old Jason got in on the act rising from the grave in FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 6 which features a title theme from that house zombie Alice Cooper. And then the final horror, Bobby Ewing returning from the grave in DALLAS. Yep, zombies are definitely in.....

AND talking of Jason, I noticed that he's jumping on the Bond wagon in FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 6 which begins with Jason walking on screen and hurling an axe at the camera in a wild parody of the 007 opening credits ..

AND talking of Bond, news reaches us that the formidable Julie T. Wallace, eponymous heroine of BBC2's extraordinary THE LIFE AND LOVES OF A SHE DEVIL, is to appear in the new Bond flic THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS (number 15 I think), suffocating those unwise enough to oppose her in the depths of her 48-inch bosom. Not for the first time and not for the last the big boys are plundering the works of the pioneer exploiters - in this case Chesty Morgan (aka Daria Wimbann) who produced, directed and starred in 1974's DEADLY WEAPONS, a film that impressed the critics as "A freak show" and "An insult not only to those who view it but also, perversely, to its uniquely endowed subject." Chesty was supremely equipped for those titty terminations, breasting the tape at 73 inches to make Ms Wallace look like Twiggy. . .

FINALLY with Christmas just around the corner comes the perfect present for any horror film buff providing they've got a bloody big stocking and very generous friends or relatives. THE AURUM FILM ENCYCLOPEDIA VOLUME 3 HORROR is quite simply the most comprehensive guide yet produced on the genre. A companion book to VOLUME 2 SCIENCE FICTION it's a must even at £19.95

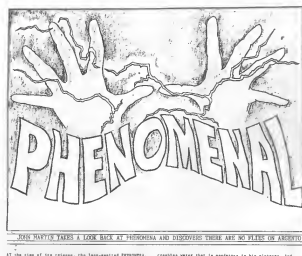


STEVEN SPIELBERG JULIE T. WALLACE

Images Of Argento.



Gordon Finlayson



JOHN MARTIN TAKES A LOOK BACK AT PHENOMENA AND DISCOVERS THERE ARE NO FLIES ON ARGENTO

AT the time of its release, the long-awaited PHENOMENA, the first film from Dario Argento's DAC Films Company, was his most controversial and critically ill-received so far. This was ironic as the film is, and was clearly intended to be, his most commercial to date. It did fairly well in the cinemas and the video tape is still renting well although this must be down to word of mouth and Argento's increasing cult following, as the film took a real slagging from mainstream and genre critics alike.

The silly change of title to CREEPERS didn't help and neither did the disappearance of approximately 20 minutes of running time (curiously, it was the scenes of exposition that got the chop: Most of the violence was left intact, though the two-razoring of Daria Nicolodi's face that was seen at the cinema is missing from the video release) However Alan Jones' unexpected savaging of PHENOMENA did come after he saw a complete print and, from a previously stalwart admirer, his verdict in "Starburst" - "Argento out of control ... an incoherent mess" came as a shock Why was the film such a difficult one for the pundits ("A movie that will captivate some and defeat others" - Martin Coxhead) - even for those who have in the past received Argento's work so favourably

Even by the standards of a film-maker as unafraid of experiment as Dario Argento, PHENOMENA is a transitional movie More than the olfactory capacity of the Great Sarcophagus, or the telepathic tendencies of sadomasochistic schoolgirl schizophrenics in Switzerland the phenomenon that is really under the microscope in PHENOMENA is the director himself. He has recently been musing in the press on his rock star-like status in Italy and PHENOMENA is, in part, a restatement of his own considerable cinematic achievements, a re-appraisal of his own legend.

So from the word go his favourite fetishes are indulged - a young girl (Fiore Argento, further evidence of the incestuousness of the proceedings) is stabbed in the SUSPIRIA-like opening and has her head pushed through glass in slow-motion to the accompaniment of the crashing water that is mandatory in his pictures And the animals again - I wonder if Argento has heard the track "Animals" from Talking Head's "Fear of Music" album I think he'd enjoy it.

The themes and ideas that have been developed through his career recur in PHENOMENA - there's the continuing predilection for esoteric scientific information delivered with a high-tech aloof a la FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET Familiar Argento iconography continues with the draped mirrors (a jokey reference to DEEP RED) and the representation of the blocked artist that dates right back to THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE, where Tony Musante is literally trapped behind glass at one point Also dating back to THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE is the idea of the sexual assault that causes problems later.

The soundtrack is every bit as strong as you would expect, but paralleling the visual imagery, it's more eclectic than ever before As well as the usual miraculous stuff from The Goblins there's a pastoral contribution from Bill Wyman, a Tangerine Dream-like piece for the heroine's sleep-walking sojourns and gorgeous helpings of Benvy Matei This variety works in some pieces better than others, nowhere better than where Iron Maiden's "Flash of the Blade" accompanies the flight of a girl over a de Chirico lawn with the killer in hot pursuit, and even better as Jennifer tries to retrieve the telephone with a pole, the spiralling riff setting us up for the spiralling twists of the denouement that is about to break on us

And of course in this denouement the violence that Argento's admirers expect is delivered in spades, Argento's "directorial style intensity and reckless verve" (as Coxhead has it) complimented by Sergio Stivaletti's special effects to make for Guignol as Grand as it comes. At the time of TENEBRAE Argento uncompromisingly expressed his feelings on his heroines - "I like women, especially beautiful ones. If they have a good face and figure I would much prefer to watch them being murdered than an ugly girl or a man." And this time he has found as a heroine and chief focus of audience anxiety Jennifer Connelly (soon to be seen in



DIRECTOR, DARIO ARGENTO PUTS JENNIFER CONNELLY THROUGH HER PACES IN PHENOMENA

Jim Henson's LABYRINTH) when he accurately describes as " beautiful tremendously beautiful, [illegible] an angelic vision of womanhood " Indeed Connelly makes an even more appealing wide-eyed innocent than Jessica Harper in SUSPIRIA

There's the prize-taking camera-work, including second unit director Luigi(CONTAMINATION) Cozzi's macro-photography of The Great Sarcophagus, And that head pushed through the glass, in slow motion for your delectation, the treatment repeated for good measure as another girl as Jennifer sleep-walks on the ledge outside. As always Argento's roving camera-eye is more interested in how things are happening rather than why One can expect mainstream critics, unfamiliar and ill-at-ease with this Pure Cinema approach to be non-plussed and complain that the plot is "slight" or 'absurd " But the quibbling on this score from the seasoned Argento-watchers was harder to fathom Argento has always been (to quote Clive Barker in Shock Xpress) "...not an arch telling stories as he is creating atmosphere and visuals." And much earlier than this, on the video liner notes for SUSPIRIA, Alexander Walker puts it this way - "Argento is a talent who gets - and gives - fun by loading his movies to excess and making the plot run second to a series of absurdist set-pieces."

In other words it doesn't matter, for instance that the scenario of an avenging chimpanzee finding a cut-throat razor in a bin is not one that you're likely to come across in real life, just as corpses are not usually brought out on stretchers to the metallic strains of Motorhead - suspend your disbelief and get on board Argento's magic bus , you'll enjoy the ride. Don't judge movies by the standards of the novel (and while we're on the subject remember that Joyce's Ulysses in [illegible], was slammed for its "lack of narrative sweep ")

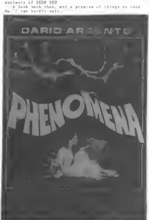
But if the mainstream critics disliked PHENOMENA because it has so much of the Argento stamp on it, what about the genre critics? Alan Jones complained that the scene in which Jennifer, " .. on one of her somnambulistic wanderings...sees a girl menaced by the masked killer.., is the only sequence that measures up to the usual powerful and poetic imagery we expect from the Argento movie " Indeed, this is the sequence from PHENOMENA that would sit most comfortably in any of the previous films, with its sharp, snappy editing Argento now appears to be interested in a more flowing style with long continuous takes - the sort of shot that appeared to spectacular effect in TENEBRAE, with the voracious camera taking in every aspect of the victims' appartment, and commences PHENOMENA with a rising shot over "Swiss Transylvania" and later follows The Great Sarcophagus around Jennifer and the estate agent and down through the floorboards to the charnel house Something else which appears to have been put on hold is the plot device of the puzzle with the missing piece that finally fits into place - Argento seems to have resolved his obsession with BLOW UP for the moment (though there is a hint of DEEP RED's re-echo of the killer's identity when Jennifer gets off the tram with her fly-box).

As well as his continuing preoccupations Argento has stepped outside the corpus of his own work to borrow from the wider annals of contemporary horror cinema (and at one point from as far back as 1943, a delicious lift from I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE), a cinema which owes more to Argento than is widely realised - just think of HALLOWEEN and its descendants! I believe it's this widening of his horizons that has disaffected some of Argento's purist fans, like a school kid going off his favourite group when everyone else discovers them

PHENOMENA is not a sell-out, I don't feel that Argento is so much chasing dollars as demanding recognition for his place in the first division of world talent, which has been hindered, for example, by distribution problems in America. This motif of recognition/acclaim is signalled during the course of Argento's new film, where a Bee Gee grins out at us from a school-girl's Tee shirt and, to the dismay of Daria Nicolodi, Richard Gere takes precedence over Richard Wagner Note the characters' star-struck reaction to the news that Jennifer is the daughter of Paul Corvino, a film star as opposed to Peter Neal, the celebrity in TENEBRAE (and even further removed from the struggling artists in earlier films) Even Donald Pleasence's wheelchair-bound character is "the famous entomologist John McGregor "

PHENOMENA is obviously a step forward From the (inevitably) beautiful, crystal-clear photography of the Swiss Alps it is obvious that we are far removed from the claustrophobic confines of a DEEP RED or a SUSPIRIA (in which even the exterior shots like the Koenigsplatz sequences are so oppressive). And this feeling of liberation obtains right through to that shattering and, the climactic series of twists more audacious even than in TENEBRAE but here all done out in the open on location Influences from THE FUNHOUSE and POLTERGEIST (the heroine treading water in a sea of offal an ironic comment on the genre?) are present and correct and the developments on and around the lake tease the audience with more than a touch of FRIDAY THE 13TH, till the scene blossoms underwater into a quotation from INFERNO, before a penultimate twist with overtones of the Oedipal outlawry of DEEP RED

A look back then, and a promise of things to come Me, I can hardly wait



A UNIQUE VISION. David Cronenberg...

BY MICHAEL WESLEY

EVER since coming his entry into the world of major feature films just over ten years ago the Canadian writer/director David Cronenberg has proved consistently to be one of the most daring and original working within the horror/science fiction genre.

To people whose idea of this area of cinema consists of many of the stock cliches (haunted houses and vengeful spirits, psychopathic killers, battles far off in outer space etc.) stumbling on the films of this man normally proves to be an eye-opening experience. Within his unique vision of horror gone are all the cosy traditions of fantastic cinema and in their place are cold, stark, surreal horrors whose ideas spring from the most obvious sources of fear: the body and its ability to be corrupted and destroyed by both disease and the ravages of time.

Not that these are all that concern him and his ideas. Some of his films challenge social problems, but in a nightmarishly bizarre way. THE BROOD, for instance is a film about childhood traumas being fully realised in adult life, and about parental care or the lack of it. VIDEODROME is an attack on contemporary society and its ability to separate "real" reality from real life: if you like, a savage indictment of the "Video Nasty" culture. It is laughable to think how savagely treated this film was by the vast majority of critics, who condemned it as exactly the sort of material that it itself was condemning, because it had achieved it in an explicit and shocking way.

Whatever one's final opinions are on the subject matter of these films, it is quite obvious how rapidly his technical expertise and artistic abilities as a director have improved with each new film. From the sheer shock value of SHIVERS, to the dense, thought-provoking almost sinuous power of VIDEODROME, to his most accomplished film to date, THE DEAD ZONE with its warmth, depth of character and visual excellence, it is clear that this brilliant talent is destined to be looked back on by future genre enthusiasts as one of the most important of all.

It is with great expectation that I personally, and no doubt all his other followers, look forward to THE FLY and future works in the hope that he will continue to further forge ahead into an area of cinema which is uniquely his own.

GENRE FEATURES OF DAVID CRONENBERG TO DATE

SHIVERS aka THE PARASITE MURDERS aka THEY CAME FROM WITHIN (1975, 87 minutes)

An opulent Montreal apartment block, Starliner Towers, is quickly ravaged by a parasite which spreads through sexual contact, and the film ends as the occupants drive out from the garage off of their island, to gleefully set about infecting everyone within reach. It sounds disgusting and it is, but also a great deal more. The direction is taut, claustrophobic and highly convincing, performances vary from average (Lynn Lowry) to very convincing (Paul Hampton and Susan Petrie especially) and the makeup effects are in a class of their own.

While showing no real artistic flair, but content to be merely efficient in coming home the shock value, the film undoubtedly contains some of the most strikingly visual horrors ever committed to film: the parasite crawling from Allan Migicovsky's mouth to the horror of his wife and Joe Silver's attempts to pull the creatures from his face with pliers, can hardly be topped. In short, one of the most powerful and original tickets given by any director into feature films and Lynn Lowry's character's final few lines of dialogue near the end show just how original the mind of Cronenberg was gone to become.



RABID (1976, 91 minutes)

Unfortunately his second feature was more of a retread than a departure. Rose (Marilyn Chambers) undergoes advanced surgery after a motorcycle accident and (inexplicably) develops a syringe-like parasite in her armpit which sucks blood, concisely it is Cronenberg's own variation on the standard vampire movie.

Although being his most disappointing film, it is still way above most similar fare. It is exciting, well-directed, gory and somehow manages to make its central character touching and sympathetic. There is also an alarming scene out during an operation which touches very nicely on a patient's fear of helplessness while undergoing surgery. In addition the editing is fast and precise.



THE BROOD (1979, 91 minutes)

Of his feature films released in the seventies this was by far the best. A mentally disturbed woman under the care of a revolutionary psychologist Dr. Hal Raglan (Oliver Reed) begins to take revenge on her parents, estranged husband's lover, child etc. in a most bizarre way. For under the technique of psychoplasmics she develops the "Brood", children of her own rage, to do her deeds for her. They are given "birth" by her, not in the normal sense, but developing in cancerous sacks on the outside of her body. The scene where she reveals the secret to her husband, while sedentary on the floor, by lifting her nightgown, is one of the most striking scenes in all horror cinema.

The mood achieved by both the direction and performances (Samantha Eggar as Nola and Oliver Reed as Raglan has seldom been better) was exemplary and makes it one of Cronenberg's most powerful films, even after repeated viewings. Credit must also be given to the brilliant cinematography of Mark Irwin (later to become a regular Cronenberg contributor) and Howard Shore's memorably dark score, perfectly complementing the action at the film's dramatic climax. In horror movie terms, a work of art.



SCANNERS (1980, 103 minutes)

Released in 1981, this was Cronenberg's biggest budgeted film to date and contained some of his most brilliant and imaginative scenes. It was also rather uncertainly directed and at times skimmed over parts that needed elaborating while concentrating too strongly on others. Nevertheless the set pieces are astonishing: the opening telepathic battle in which a man's head explodes, the destruction of the garage caused by a computer shutting down while a scanner links his nervous system to it to obtain information via a telephone, and, most powerfully, the final "scanning" duel between the good scanner Cameron Vale (Stephen Lack) and his evil brother Daryl Revok (Michael Ironside in a convincingly evil performance) in which veins split, flesh burns and eyes burst from their sockets.

The excellence of Mark Irwin and art director Carol Spier again shine through but the film is held back from being the true classic it should be by the rather sluggish direction (surprisingly in view of Cronenberg's excellent script) and by a central performance by Stephen Lack which was at times painfully inadequate. No such problem though with Patrick McGoohan who, as Dr. Ruth, turns in probably the most impressive piece of acting of his cinematic career.



VIDEODROME (1982, 89 minutes)
After the uncertainty of SCANNERS, Cronenberg struck back with his masterwork, in intellectual terms at least. James Woods plays the part of Max Renn, a television station controller whose programme output consists of sadistic sex and violence to appease the appetites of his viewers. Stumbling on a station by pirate satellite called Videodrome, he sets out to track down its' essence as he believes that it is the next step forward in sado-horror. What he finds leads him into a completely new world and existence, in which nothing appears as what it seems, and from this point on the film becomes almost too ambitious. With no way to clearly distinguish what is real or not, the viewer can only sit and react to the appallingly graphic horrors (makeup by Rick Baker and co.) as Max Renn battles to understand and control Videodrome and its creators.

To try and accurately synopsise the film would be like trying to describe the colours of a butterfly to a blind man, so I will not attempt it. What I will add is that all the performances are perfectly in tune with each other (Woods and Debbie Harry are standouts), the effects are unbelievable, cinematography is graceful, menacing and effectively lit and Cronenberg's script is the most dense, challenging and memorable of his career to date, with dialogue which would stun even the most hardened cinema-goer into open mouthed submission.

Here finally was the work of a genius realising his form in one overpowering film and producing what could conceivably stand as the most important genre movie of the decade. Unmissable.





THE DEAD ZONE (1983, 103 minutes)
With THE DEAD ZONE Cronenberg turned into a director-for-hire for the first time to bring Stephen King's potent novel of a doomed psychic to the screen. It turned out to be quite possibly his best film (although lacking in the depth of vision of VIDEODROME or the script was not his own) and certainly his warmest in emotional terms. Johnny Smith (Christopher Walken in amiable performance) awakes from a long coma to find girlfriend married, his job gone, his legs near crippled and the side effect of seeing into the future which leads him into a life-or-death confrontation with a power-crazy presidential candidate, Greg Stillson (Martin Sheen walking his performance accurately on the right side of theatricality).

As in VIDEODROME, all the elements fused together into one superb whole: acting, music, editing, set designs and of course Cronenberg's poised confident supremely accurate direction. It is encouraging to realise that his sixth major genre release hints at strength in David Cronenberg yet to surface, that of a supreme storyteller with a perfect emphasis on character, exposition and dramatic and emotional strength. His future looks to be extremely interesting and worthwhile. Only time and THE FLY can tell.



Each issue we will be nominating an individual, film, company or whatever for the prestigious "GOLDEN BOG ROLL" award with which to clean up their act.

This issue the award goes to THE SUN newspaper for its coverage of the sex killings of Nicola Fellows and Karen Hadaway (tackily dubbed "The Babes in the Wood" murders.)

The Sun gleefully revealed in the best SHOCK HORROR EXPOSE tradition, that Nicola's father, Barry, campaigned against the iniquitous Video recordings Bill, arguing for the rights of consenting adults to watch whatever they please in their own homes.

"That's all in the past..." said Mr. Fellows "What's it got to do with the murder of my daughter?" Not a lot, as far as we can see but The Soaraway Sun, which simultaneously ran a FRIGHT NIGHT competition, hyping it with the line "If you love horror movies..." could obviously see some connection we can't, and came dangerously close to saying that if you watch horror films you can't grumble if your kids are sexually molested and murdered.

For this stunning example of investigative journalism we award THE SUN the highly coveted "GOLDEN BOG ROLL."

Nominations for future awards should be sent to the editorial address on page three. The best suggestion will receive an original cinema poster for THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD, a suitable prize for a crappy nomination.




THE EVIL DEAD
ADAPTED BY
RICHARD FLOYD-WALKER
HEY ASH WHERE ARE WE ?
THE STORY OPENS WITH FIVE FRIENDS DRIVING TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL...
CHERYL
LINDA...
AND ASH
SHELLY
AND SCOTT
ASH DID YOU HEAR ME
WELL.. WE'VE JUST CROSSED THE BORDER..
WHICH SHOULD PUT US...
...RIGHT...
AROUND
...HERE !
SCREEEEEEEEEEEECH!
CHRIST !!



TURN TO PAGE 22 FOR "THATS THE BRIDGE WE'RE GOING TO CROSS ?"

POLICE 55



FIFTY FIVE is the approximate number of films on Scotland Yard's notorious "Video Nasties" hit list and each issue, in an effort to keep you informed about the films the Boys in Blue can see and you can't, we will be looking at a couple of titles on the list. We kick off with ANTHROPOPHAGUS BEAST aka THE GRIM REAPER (1980) and its sequel ABSURD aka ANTHROPOPHAGUS 2 (1981). Barf bags at the ready please.

ALL these titles beginning with the letter "A" possibly indicate a desire on the part of the director that his efforts should head any list of films, but he probably hadn't intended them to head Scotland Yard's official list of "Video Nasties."

The director in question is Aristide Massaccesi, better known to the world as Joe D'Amato, though the direction of these two is credited to "Peter Newton". For his various other masterpieces he has signed himself Richard Franks, John Franklin, Kevin Mancuso, etc,etc, etc. For his porno outings he's Charles Borsby - his "Black Emmanuelle" series elevated Laura Gemser from nowhere to a position of obscurity. 1979's BLUE HOLOCAUST caused a stir for its alleged use of real corpses and it's the gruellingly realistic gore sequences in ANTHROPOPHAGUS and ABSURD that got them into legal difficulties at the time of censorship-mania in the U.K.

ANTHROPOPHAGUS begins with a happy German couple on holiday in Greece. We know it's Greece because of the furious Zorba-type music on the soundtrack and we know they're German because they say "Oh Jah, das ist gut" and similar teutonic stuff at every opportunity. When she goes swimming the P.O.V. shot from below indicates that in the tradition of JAWS, THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON etc, some denizen of the deep is up to no good. On the beach her boyfriend is oblivious to her screams, his personal stereo turned up loud, till the old axe-in-the-face routine spoils his holiday.

Meanwhile the ever-lovely Tisa Farrow (sister of Mia and, more importantly, star of ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS) meets a bunch of tourists in a cable car and they all get on so famously that soon they're all mooning about in boats together. This travelogue stuff goes on so long that one begins to doubt that one is watching a horror film, but have no fear sports fans, D'Amato is conserving his energy for a socko-boffo finale.

The gang turn up at a coastal village and find themselves in the middle of a Marie Celeste-type situation: Well, not exactly - various enigmatic females are running around writing "GO AWAY" on windows, hanging themselves from a great height and spitting blood all over our heroes, you know the sort of thing. They find a girl hiding out from the friendly neighbourhood psycho killer - "He's near - I can smell him" she says.

From this point on it becomes hard to work out what is going on, and even harder to keep the old eyes peeled. Every so often a throat slitting or similar piece of mutilation has the viewer waking up babbling "Wassat?" Tisa finds a grungey old diary and by means of incomprehensible flashbacks it is revealed that Anthropophagus Beast was marooned in a row-boat with his wife and child. Demented with hunger, he was just about to carve up the latter when his wife made the supreme sacrifice by jumping onto the knife. A bit pointless as the kid was already dead, but I suppose it meant that Mr. Beast got double rations.

Tisa and her companion wisely decide to hide in an attic but Anthropophagus punches through the roof, clawing the roommate's throat to reveal a pulsating thyroid gland. Just as Tisa is about to fall victim, one of the survivors turns up and stops Anthropophagus with a judicious axe in the belly resulting in a shower of offal. Game to the last, he pulls out several yards of his own intestines and chews on them before falling down, apparently dead.

There's not a lot they could do to top that, but they tried in ABSURD. Old Anthropophagus is back, again played by exploitation veteran George Eastman (Luigi Montefiori), loitering with intent outside a big house. As he is getting his leg over the railings a mysterious man emerges from the bushes and pulls his legs, resulting in impalement - yep, the guts are taking another bashing already. The culprit is a reclusive old Greek priest who's out to warn the world of up-coming peril (yes we've seen THE OMEN too).

All this lurking around upsets the occupants of the house, including a kid even more obsessive than is usual in these things, and his bed-ridden sister whose head is screwed to some sort of orthopaedic/medieval torture device. She spends all her time doodling obsessively with a set of compasses-her mother wishes she'd stop this, but seasoned watchers of these films will know that she's wise to keep them at hand as they'll inevitably be required at some point for sticking in some psycho's eyes. The kid opens the door and finds, not the Avon Lady, but the Anthropophagus gentleman clutching several pounds of butcher's offal to his torso to indicate disembowelment. He staggers off but before long feels well enough to snack on a member of an Italian scooter club, who has broken down on the road. Not even being run over by a speeding car stifles his appetite.

The hit-and-run driver goes home, by a strange coincidence, to the big house featured earlier. The little brat tells pop that there was a monster at the door tonight, but his bleeding-heart mom tells him not to say that about the unfortunate man who died trying to burgle their house. After a two-second spasm of conscience the hit-and-run driver goes with his wife to their friend's house to watch the football game and guzzle inordinate amounts of spaghetti.

It's just as well he didn't torture himself too much with guilt, because in the local hospital Mr. Beast is very much alive and slashing. Various people are stabbed through the neck and a nurse has her head drilled. During the course of his hospitalisation there's also a stab at exposition. When they operate on him a medic observes "It's impossible, but his cerebral mass actually increased during the operation." The diagnosis is that "He has such a high coefficient of blood coagulation that any wounds heal themselves" i.e. he's virtually indestructible (though vulnerable to a head shot as zombie buffs probably suspected) - it seems that floating around in an open boat for a few weeks can do more than merely turn you into a cannibal. And why does he kill? - "The cells aren't reproducing themselves perfectly, so he's insane" "Absurd" reply various characters throughout this preposterous explanation, seeing the film and proving themselves shrewd judges.

Also revealed is the role of the Greek priest. When collared by the police he tells them that he's operating with the approval of their superiors, and pulls open his coat to reveal a dog-collar. "So you're a priest" (a brilliant deduction) "Yes, but I serve God with biochemistry instead of ritual" (Pardon?) He proceeds to tell them the hard bio-chemical facts, such as Mr. Beast is possessed by evil and God's flame is dead in him.

Back in the house the kid is warning that "The Boogy Man" is back (does this remind you of anything?) but no-one will believe him. His screwed-in sister tells him not to pay any heed to the scare stories his empty-headed and malicious baby-sitter feeds him. She changes her mind when said baby-sitter has her hair parted with an axe. Spurred to action, she packs her kid brother off outside (again just like HALLOWEEN), unscrews herself from the fiendish contraption and engages the Grim Reaper in head-to-head combat. Why she was screwed to the bed in the first place will remain one of the great imponderables of our time. The compass points are duly inserted into the maniac's eyeballs. When mom and dad arrive, kid brother tells them the score, but wait - here comes sis, telling them there's no need to fear The Boogy Man anymore as she brandishes his severed head.

D'Amato has been cited in some quarters as the most boring director in the entire world. This is an exaggeration, but it is true that the gore effects seem to have had a lot more budget lavished on them than other departments such as script, acting, etc. However it is precisely these gross-out scenes that make ANTHROPOPHAGUS and ABSURD must-sees for weirdos like them and me.

NEXT ISSUE: AXE and BLOODY MOON

Mary's monster smash



Everyman: The True Story of Franke[illegible] Sunday BBC1

AND NOW I BID MY HIDEOUS PROGENY GO FORTH AND PROSPER." These prophetic words were written back in 1816 by Mary Shelley whose FRANKENSTEIN went on to not only prosper but to appear in countless films, books, comic strips not to mention glow in the dark toys and now BBC Television's EVERYMAN series.

THE TRUE STORY OF FRANKENSTEIN, an Everyman /BBC Wales production,was really two programmes for the price of one packed into an hour and five minutes and therein lies its chief problem.Part documentary and part original dramatisation it switched from one to the other with annoying frequency which was a shame as what the BBC had come up with was a first rate documentary and probably the most faithful adaptation of Shelley's classic yet committed to film.

I would like to have seen both projects expanded and shown separately. As it was, director Alan Lewens' version of the story was lost in this programme which, like the monster, was composed of a variety of perfect, yet ill fitting parts.Naturally with only about half an hour to play with, the story of Dr. Frankenstein (Christopher Guard) and his creature (Clive Russell) was reduced to bare bones and a few choice quotes from the novel but what there was more than compensated for this.

I lost faith in TV versions of the story two years ago when Yorkshire Television produced an abysmal star-studded FRANKENSTEIN starring Robert Powell, David Warner, Carrie Fisher and John Gielgud. Well no stars in the BBC version but a shining example of just what the small screen can come up with when it tries.And a great deal of the credit must go to makeup designers Marina Monios and Bethan Jones for their marvellous rendering of the creature. If you thought Julie T. Wallace's stitches in the last episode of THE LIFE AND LOVES OF A SHE DEVIL were gross you ain't seen nothing yet.

Rising from the slab and crumbling, stitches bleeding, to the floor, Christopher Guard made a memorable creature and as if to highlight this the documentary part of the programme included clips from, among others, JESSE JAMES MEETS FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER (1965) and FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER (1958).

Of particular interest was the showing of part of the famed 1910 Edison version of FRANKENSTEIN, the first ever film version. According to the Radio Times this was the first television showing of the film which I find surprising as I can remember seeing it on the television in the past. Now if they were looking for real rarities perhaps they could have tried to track down Bela Lugosi's test reel for FRANKENSTEIN (1931) or Boris Karloff's colour test footage for SON OF FRANKENSTEIN (1939).

The bulk of the documentary comprised of brief interviews with Peter Cushing, Mel Brooks,Brian Aldiss, artist Berni Wrightson, film historian Phillip Strick, literary critic Rosemary Jackson and an all too brief visit to Forrest J. Ackerman's Ackermansion in Karloifornia where in his Grisly Land cellar he has 200 editions of Shelley's novel. Personally I find one quite adequate but there you go.

Just as much an institution in horror as FJA is of course Peter Cushing, the most famous of screen Frankensteins.(By the way can anyone tell me why Mr. Cushing only warrants ten lines in David J. Hogan's book WHO'S WHO OF THE HORRORS AND OTHER FANTASY FILMS? Unlike Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing has never turned his back on the genre that made him yet Hogan covers his career in the same length as that of Chesley Bonestell. Chesley who? Exactly, but I digress) In EVERYMAN Mr. Cushing pointed out that had the monster been a charming man who had gone on to become Prime Minister (satire?) the story wouldn't have been so interesting. Mel Brooks, who admits he made YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN (1974) as a cathartic reaction to childhood nightmares, chose to observe that the root of the story lies in "Penis Envy!" "Frankenstein's jealousy of women being able to give life so perfectly so he creates his own baby!" And if you think it's starting to get a bit heavy, there's more to come. Literary critic Rosemary Jackson: "It's also been used to exclude women and distort representations of women...it's ironic that Mary Shelley's fable by a woman should have been taken over by a male film industry." What Rosemary Jackson would have made of THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW doesn't bear thinking about. Rather than her views of what is mere entertainment I preferred the mock TV interview with Berni "CYCLE OF THE WEREWOLF" Wrightson in which the lights suddenly dim, Berni laughs maniacally as a chainsaw revs up and when the lights come on Berni's Marvel adaptation of FRANKENSTEIN is lying on the floor together with the interviewer's severed arm.

Like the programme as a whole the interviews were all too short. As Mel Brooks pointed out : "I like it so much that usually,I ask for five quid or ten quid but I'm talking for nothing because I love Frankenstein." And I'm sure the others would have had more to add but then one shouldn't grumble at what was an abundance of riches and essential viewing for anyone with even a passing interest in Mary Shelley's creation.





THE MONSTER AND HIS "MATE" KARLOFF (LEFT) AND LUGOSI IN 1939'S SON OF FRANKENSTEIN

QUATERMASS

AS well as being one of the most intelligent science fiction films of the sixties, Hammer's QUATERMASS AND THE PIT (1967) remains the best of the company's three films based on the old BBC television series of the fifties.

Part of the reason for this lies with the fact that it was the first of the three films (the other two being THE QUATERMASS XPERIMENT (1955) and QUATERMASS II (1957) in which Quatermass' originator, Nigel Kneale, was used as script writer and given a free reign in doing so.

Another decisive factor was the portrayal of Prof. Bernard Quatermass by English actor Andrew Keir. His characterisation of the professor as a trusty, gruff yet loveable scientist endeared his performance to Kneale who had made no bones about the fact that he considered American Brian Donlevy, who had played the part in the two previous films, unsuitable for the role.

It was of course THE QUATERMASS XPERIMENT that showed Hammer films there was money to be made in scaring the pants off people and by the time they had made QUATERMASS AND THE PIT they had been doing that very successfully for over ten years.

According to Kneale the BBC's rights to the original three television series have long since expired hence the reason they have never been re-shown which made the Beeb's recent showing of an episode from QUATERMASS AND THE PIT all the more enjoyable.

The episode, first screened in 1959, was shown at the culmination of a week of programmes going back over the BBC's first 50 years of broadcasting. Times have changed of course and although it was originally shown in what was then deemed an adult viewing slot complete with warning for those of a nervous disposition, it is now deemed suitable for tea time viewing and was shown before 6pm.

The 30 minute episode shown was the third of six, "Imps and Demons" which covers a section lasting about 20 minutes in the film culminating in the discovery of the decaying Martians in their space craft.

Happily, unlike many of the older programmes shown in the TV50 week, QUATERMASS AND THE PIT has stood the test of time very well and particularly impressive was the standard of acting though this was as much due to the intelligent script as anything else. Andre Morell made for a convincing Quatermass and it was nice to see Michael Ripper cropping up as a sergeant. Ironically Ripper went on to appear in just about every Hammer film bar QUATERMASS AND THE PIT.

Both the Martian spaceship and the Martians themselves were superior to their big screen counterparts which says a lot for the BBC who seemed to be pulling out all the stops on this one.

I wasn't quite born when the series first went out and have only seen the film but Kneale (whose highly underrated HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH was just as refreshingly original in its own way) seems to have made little changes for the film script, a lot of the lines being repeated word for word in both versions.

Naturally with the series running over roughly three hours they were able to go into more detail and one notable addition not seen in the film is the introduction of a group of journalists chasing up the story of just what it was that had been found in the excavations at Hobb's Lane.

My only criticism was "Why only show one episode". there must be a lot of people dying to know what happened so perhaps a letter-writing campaign is in order. We can but try. the address is in the Radio Times!



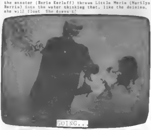
QUATERMASS (ANDRE MORELL) RONEY (CEC LINDER) AND FRIEND IN A SCENE FROM THE BBC'S QUATERMASS AND THE PIT

Frankenstein

"YOU'RE WATCHING CHANNEL FOUR AND WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE IS A PIECE OF FILM AND TELEVISION HISTORY. FOR TONIGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER 50 YEARS AND THANKS TO THE NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE WE ARE ABLE TO SHOW THE CLASSIC 1931 FILM VERSION OF FRANKENSTEIN IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM. THAT SAID LET THE CURTAIN RISE ON A LITTLE LATE NIGHT HORROR."

Unfortunately that was the only advance warning Channel Four gave that they were showing the film in its complete form as there was no mention in the TV Times or in the press but those who did tune in at 11pm on Saturday January 25 this year weren't disappointed.

Pictured below is the famous "Banned" scene in which the monster (Boris Karloff) throws Little Maria (Marilyn Harris) into the water thinking that, like the daisies, she will float. She doesn't!







MENZIES' MARAUDERS



THE ORIGINAL "INVADERS"

BY JOHN MARTIN

IF David Cronenberg's upcoming THE FLY promises to be more interesting than the 1958 original (an enjoyable but minor piece of schlock), my experience of recent Tobe Hooper product leads me to expect that his INVADERS FROM MARS will be a lot less interesting than the 1953 version (Correct Ed)

Politically inclined critics will view as typical, in the era of RAMBO and RED DAWN, this remake of a film from the golden age of Cold War cinema William Cameron Menzies' original is a contemporary of THE THING (1951) RED PLANET MARS (1952 – the most demented of the lot) IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE (1953) THIS ISLAND EARTH (1955) and I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE (1958): And the reason given for the Martian strike at a U S military establishment is an astonishing prediction of "Star Wars" (not the film, the "Strategic Defence Initiative") – i e, the Martians feel that their territorial space has been encroached upon by Earth experiments to put missiles into orbit (c f THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL) Sure, the fear that your nearest and dearest are somehow otherwise than you thought they were, can be read as an allegory of Communism or McCarthyism but I find it more interesting to take at face value the fear that something malevolent lies beside the facade of rosy reality' In the knowledge that there will be no shortage of political analyses, this piece will emphasise the psychological perspective – the key to INVADERS FROM MARS

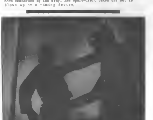
The story deals with David Maclean (Jimmy Hunt), a normal little kid in a regular happy family Mr Maclean (Leif Erickson), who works on a secret defence project shares his son's enthusiasm for astronomy One night David wakes to witness a flying saucer landing on nearby waste-ground His dad goes out to investigate and is sucked down into a sand-pit When he returns he is "different" and decidedly anti-social Other townspeople go the same way, including a little girl who becomes a pyromaniac The Maclean's family life is torn apart by the change in Pop, and David spots a strange mark on the back of his neck He goes to warn the police but the sergeant, who has undergone a similar change, calls up his mother (Hillary Brooke)

David is horrified to find the mark on the back of her neck, but he is saved by the intercession of pretty Dr Pat Blake (Helena Carter) She listens to his story and takes him to the lab/observatory of her boyfriend Dr Stuart Kelston (Arthur Franz) a scientist and astronomer who has been anticipating Martian invasion for some time They call in the army and the Martian underground H Q is stormed Our heroes are captured by towering bug-eyed green zipper-suited creatures who are controlled by "The Supreme Intelligence," a hydrocephalic head with squid tentacles who lives in a bell jar (The "prop" crops up in a cameo role in a rollar in Hooper's remake) and directs their actions with John Belushi-like gyrations of his eyebrows In a curious reversal of Terrestrial Royal etiquette the drones always walk backwards towards his goldfish bowl to take him for walkies



DAVID (JIMMY HUNT) AND DR STUART KELSTON (ARTHUR FRANZ) GET TO GRIPS IN INVADERS FROM MARS

David takes a leading part in rescuing Pat, who is about to be fitted with a neck implant (which, we have learned, control the subjects' actions and then terminate them when they have served the Martians' purpose) and in the escape from the H Q , which is then bombarded by the army. The space-craft takes off but is blown up by a timing device,



AN AMERICAN SOLDIER PREPARES TO LOSE HIS STRIPES AT THE HANDS OF A MARTIAN IN INVADERS FROM MARS

Pat and Stuart tell David his parents are safe and they put him to bed – "The little one has had a busy day" says Pat. They watch him fall asleep but later David is awakened by a clap of thunder Going to the window, he sees a spaceship landing on the wasteground.

Danny Peary in his CULT MOVIES, makes the mistake of lumping INVADERS FROM MARS too closely together with INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS and I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE – "The suspense builds as (the protagonists) discover that more and more of their acquaintances have been replaced by counterfeits and as they futilely try to get someone to believe their incredible stories " Elsewhere Peary insists "And Marge (heroine of I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE) has the same difficulty Jimmy Hunt and Kevin McCarthy had telling the good guys from the bad."

In fact David has no problem at all sussing out goodies and baddies, a quick look at the back of someone's neck will settle the matter And as for making people believe him, the only guys who won't act on his story are the Martian plants, which is hardly surprising Pat swallows his story rapidly, ace scientist Stuart tells him his story is in line with scientific theory and intelligence reports, and the army sends tons of military hardware merely on his say-so

What we are dealing with here are childhood fantasies of omnipotence, akin to those in Joe Dante's segment of TWILIGHT ZONE THE MOVIE At one point he demonstrates Martian High-tech weaponry to the admiring military Stuart and Pat become his "Good Parent" figures – Pat especially is the sort of woman you can imagine a small boy having a crush on, The flip-side of this is that his Martian-controlled "Bad Parents", after their dip in the Id-pit, are not neutral and withdrawn as in INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS and I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE, but tetchy and surly averse to throwing blows at small humans – indeed at one point the Maclean's become urban guerillas. The doppelgangers are themselves smarting, suspicious and paranoid

The dreamy feel of INVADERS FROM MARS is hardly surprising – writers Rosemary and John Tucker Battle developed the story from a discussion of one of her dreams The dream-state is hinted at in the depiction of Martian life-forms, with their accentuated split between the psychical and the corporeal Hooper's remake shuffles the plot to make the story more "realistic" (a consideration which didn't count for much in either POLTERGEIST or LIFEFORCE) but one would imagine this would militate against the dream atmosphere Menzies worked so hard to establish, and detract from the trick ending

Interestingly, J.T. Battle was so outraged by the addition of that ending to his story that he had his name taken off the credits. Was it the literalness of the penultimate twist or its immediate denial that he objected to?

Nor should we be surprised by the child's eye point of view - the property was originally intended as a kiddie's matinee programmer with a 60,000 dollars budget (compared to 12 million for Hooper's remake). Independent producer Edward L. Alperson enticed William Cameron Menzies to direct it. The noted production designer came up with something radically different from the run of juvenile fare, but at the same time evoked as never before the uncertain world of a child through his innovative set designs, namely, accentuated high verticality within the framing, tilted camera angles, dramatic lighting to create texture and depth, and the startling use of brilliant colours.

Particularly memorable is the nightmare visit to the police station where both time and space are distorted. Furnishings are over-sized (the cop at the desk is elevated to the status of judge), the walls are bare and the clock-hands don't move. Time is also distorted near the end when David runs for his life from the Martian base - again indicated by the sluggish movement of the needle on the timing device.

Sets are distorted - the back yard is particularly eerie as though it were left over from THE WIZARD OF OZ, and the rough fence-bound track leading nowhere is straight out of a canvas by Van Gogh. Trick perspective and painted back-drops recall Wiene's THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI. In the underground chambers Menzies exaggerated the size of the mutants by pitting them against midgets in military uniform and by casting towering actors to play them, including the 8foot blach circus performer Max Palmer, and Lock Martin, the cinema doorman who played Gort in THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL. As in the same year's THE WAR OF THE WORLDS there are lurid colours, but they don't flood the screen a la SUSPIRIA, and the dark sun-burned flesh tones stand out (memorably with the sweating hot and bothered "Mr. Marleen"), something akin to what Nick Roeg achieved in CASINO ROYALE and A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM.

It was originally intended that the picture would be shot in voguish 3D (like IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE) but this was abandoned on budgetary grounds. However, as in another film for which 3D was mooted and then dropped, HALLOWEEN, the production design gave it that stereoscopic look anyway. Check especially the scene just before the military make their strike, the figures stretched out in rigidly demarked planes like the 3D you get on breakfast cereal packets. Even the stark footage that is used has been carefully selected to show tanks, planes etc, zooming into and out of the distance.

To complement the visuals, French composer Raoul Kraushaar (subsequently to work on THE TEN COMMANDMENTS and CABARET) supplied a highly effective score. The film opens with martial music and throughout, familiar U.S. marching theme recur as themes. Best of all, the sounds of the sucking pit, a Philip Glass-like cadence of eight male and eight female voices reverberating around an echo chamber.

Menzies completed 65 minutes of footage so Alperson contracted Wesley (CREATION OF THE HUMANOIDS) Barry, who shot the very strange observatory sequence, added gruesome helpings of stock footage and repeated shots of mutants running around in tunnels to boost INVADERS FROM MARS to feature length. For European release Alperson deleted the double-twist ending but we still get 82 minutes as opposed to 78 in the U.S., most of their prints losing the observatory scene.

This scene, the weirdest in a pretty weird film, clinches INVADERS FROM MARS as David's fantasy. He converses as an equal with Dr. Kelston (spouting equal rubbish), impressing Pat, his idealised figure of womanhood, proving that he is indeed a "little man". Stuart reveals classified military secrets to him with an air of



AD ART FOR TOBE HOOPER'S REMAKE OF INVADERS FROM MARS


MIDGETS VERSUS MARTIANS IN A SCENE FROM INVADERS FROM MARS

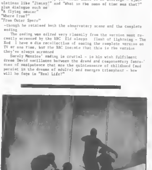
"this is just between you and me. That the scene was shot in a hurry to pad out the film is evidenced by gaps in logic and the off-the-wall dialogue - David and Stuart talk about life on Mars as though it's an established fact. What's more, the Martians have been around longer than us, have been observing us with an eye to invasion, and are served by brutish servants ("a race of synthetic humans") called mutants. All this comes strictly out of thin air. When Pat repeatedly voices the audience's protests about the plausibility of what he is saying his standard reply is "That's what they said about aeroplanes."

As well as the cut-and-dried "Life on Mars" stuff it's even stated that Mars (War) is nearer in its orbital path to Earth than Venus (Love) - hinting at an astrological explanation for the change in people's behaviour. Then, in a moment reminiscent of POLICE SQUAD, Stuart pulls from his cupboard a succession of weird and wonderful spaceship models that would be the envy of any junk-ophile, even of our esteemed editor.

In 1976 a Kansas City film distributor, Wade Williams, obtained the rights to the film and his re-issue deleted stock footage and lines he considered corny (of which there is no shortage - ejaculations like "Jimmy!" and "What in the name of time was that?" plus dialogue such as
"A flying saucer"
"Where from?"
"From Outer Space"
-though he retained both the observatory scene and the complete ending.

The ending was edited very clumsily from the version most recently screened by the BBC. Kid sleeps - flash of lightning - The End. I have a dim recollection of seeing the complete version on TV at one time, but the BBC insists that this is the version they've always screened.

Surely Menzies' ending is crucial - in his wish fulfilment dream David vacillates between the dread and compensatory fantasies of omnipotence that are the quintessence of childhood (and persist in the dreams of adults) and emerges triumphant - how will he fare in "Real Life?"


MIDGETS AND MARTIANS INDULGE IN A SPOT OF MAYHEM IN INVADERS FROM MARS

CARRY ON AT CRYSTAL LAKE

JUST when you thought it was safe to go out in your row-boat, FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 6 will soon be among us and what's more Paramount are promising threatening to take the series right up to part 13, I kid you not For those who are new to this everyday story of genocidal folk here's a run-down of what's been happening in the first five films of a series whose solid story-lines and continuity have become legend

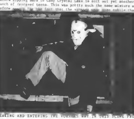
A bunch of vacationing kids ignored the warnings of the local crazy galoot about Camp Crystal Lake and had sharp instruments inserted in every conceivable nook, cranny and orifice, including a spectacular Saint Sebastian job on Bing Crosby's son Harry And so it was that FRIDAY THE 13TH (1980) was unleashed onto the world The culprit (in the film) was eventually revealed as one Mrs Vorhees, whose son Jason had drowned while camp counsellors were busy fornicating Alice, the sole survivor, was understandably peeved by all this and decapitated Mrs V with a spade Taking a boat out on Crystal Lake, Alice was dragged down to Davey Jones' locker by the lad himself, Jason the mommy mongoloid is what turned out to be a dream sequence Or was it? No way Jose' Jason had not drowned at all Instead of going home he had decided to spend a few years sloshing around a lake from which he witnessed his Mom's demise

A short time later (FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 2, 1981) having grown alarmingly and been cured of his Downes syndrome (which was initially concealed from the audience as he strolled inconspicuously into town with a spud bag over his head), Jason came a-callin' on Alice, who discovered Mrs V's noggin along with the silver tops in her fridge shortly before Jason picked her nose with a screwdriver

Retrieving the old girl's bonce to put back in his woodland shrine, he presumably got the next Greyhound bus back to Camp Crystal Lake, the second re-opening of which had drawn the predictable influx of dope-smoking sex maniacs Local crazy galoots were garotted, paraplegics machetted in the head and pushed down the stairs in their wheelchairs and two hep-cats making out were shishkebabed in a scene lifted from Mario Bava's ANTEFATOO/BLOODBATH The CARRIE rip-off er homage from the end of the first film became an ongoing situation in the second and to the surprise of everyone in the audience (except those with upward of three brain cells) each time the characters relaxed Jason came leaping through the window/down the chimney/out of a Christmas cracker In the process he sustained wounds that would have decimated the Red Army but his recuperative powers, inherited from HALLOWEEN'S Michael Myers, saw him through

Next time out (FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 3 3D 1982) Jason had reverted to the bold Mongoloid look (though most of the time modestly hiding behind a hockey goalie's mask) and had the luxury of 3D with which to highlight his gory handiwork Among the expected 3D silly shots of washing flapping and yo-yos yo-yoing, Jason managed to fire a harpoon into the audience, squeeze eyeballs out of their sockets into our laps and neatly halve a smart-Alec walking on his hands, till an axe in his mask cramped his style Obviously a fan of PART 1, the sole survivor jumped into a boat and pushed it out onto the lake Jason, grinning madly, played peek-a-boo in the windows of a lake-side house until Mrs Vorhees, seemingly well-recovered from her decapitation jumped out of that damn lake

In FRIDAY THE 13TH THE FINAL CHAPTER (1984) Jason was taken from the barn in which he had apparently died to hospital, where he set about redoing overmanning with the ferocity of an Edwina Currie, before zipping back to Camp Crystal Lake to sort out yet another bunch of depraved teens This was pretty much the same mixture as before except for the fact that the victims were more nubile than



BREAKING AND ENTERING THE VORHEES WAY IN THIS SCENE FROM FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 3 3D



HE'S BACK! THE MAN IN THE MASK IN THIS SCENE FROM FRIDAY THE 13TH PART V A NEW BEGINNING

ever and included a pair of identical twins for those who like that sort of thing

The apparently indestructable Jason eventually kicked the bucket because some insufferable prat called Little Tommy shaved his head and minced around the house mumbling "Jason remember?" A likely story!

Jason figured only briefly in FRIDAY THE 13TH A NEW BEGINNING (1985), rising from his coffin (worms wiggling mattily in the eye-holes of his hockey mask) to mutilate some grave desecrators in Tommy's nightmare Tommy was by now residing at a funny farm and head-cases replaced loose-living juveniles as axe/knife/chainsaw fodder The incomprehensible "plot" was predicated on the dubious theory that anyone who witnesses an axe-killing will become an axe-killer, as the suspects increased geometrically as the film progressed The most memorable part of this one was the scene in which a Prince lookalike sitting on a toilet sang a duet with his girlfriend before.. Oh the joys of Camp Crystal Lake Roll on Parts 6, 7, 8.



THANK GOD ITS FRIDAY



DON'T OPEN THE WINDOW BECAUSE THE LIVING DEAD ARE HAVING BREAKFAST AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE !!

BY JOHN MARTIN

ANOTHER Italo-Spanish co-production, another smash from the Edmondo Amanti stable: With what looks like only a slightly higher budget than ZOMBIE CREEPING FLESH this one shows what can be done on the cheap if you have that certain something called... talent. Having said that, originality is hardly the film's strongest suit - not only the storyline but whole sequences and even the composition of shots are plundered from NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD. Alan Frank in his book "SF NOW" says the film is "..clearly inspired by George A. Romero's amateurish, overrated NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD. However unlike most derivative films, LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE was a considerable improvement upon its exemplar... what sets the film apart from NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD is its immense sense of style which, without vitiating its horrific impact, at the same time imposes a unity over all its elements, particularly the powerful sense of unease and tension..."(Jorge Grau, the director) creates a disturbing sense of dislocation with his essentially alien view of familiar Lake District locations, churchyards and hospital." Interesting that it should take a Spanish director to get the best out of Windsmere, Dovedale, Castleton, etc. It's jarring indeed to see zombles lurching around in all their eerie splendour, and in the manner of Dario Argento, Grau has complemented his visuals with a stereo soundtrack calculated to put the viewer's nerves on edge.

Manchester figures only briefly in the impressionistic opening. Trendy George (good name for an English hero, right?), played by Ray Lovelock, drives out of town on his chic Italian scooter with his scarf wrapped around his face to indicate the prevailing condition of the eco-sphere.

The introduction proceeds with what David Pirie calls "Uneasy accumulation of detail" - people in protective suits in bus queues (to the bemusement of their fellow but unwitting extras); a bowler hatted city gent takes pills in a doorway as birds die in the gutter; and at one point a girl throws off her raincoat and runs naked down the road as the radio warns against "hysterics when confronted with ecological problems, many of them exaggerated."Incidentally, there is some dispute as to whether the featured city actually is Manchester, or somewhere else. Some sources identify it as London, others settle for "a city." I personally subscribe to the theory that it is indeed Manchester.

George emerges into lush countryside but when he stops at a service-station Edna (Christine Galbo) drives over his bike. She reluctantly gives him a lift for the remainder of his journey. Her car jostles with a road-hog municipal van marked "Manchester Morgue," then they get lost and separate to ask for directions. As oscillations fill the soundtrack, George is attracted to a machine in a field operated by white-coated scientists. They tell him that its purpose is to destroy insect pests. Back at the car Edna is menaced by a blue-faced, bearded vagrant with a noose around his neck and answering to the description of "Guthrie the Loony" (R.I.P.) The plot thickens when it is revealed that the new-born babies in a hospital are biting and thumbing the staff -"They're almost homicidal!" Checking back with the machine operators, George deduces that the sound-waves, which irritate the insects to the point that they eat each other, have an excitory effect on primitive nervous systems - e.g. new-born babies, the recently dead and "Sun" readers. (No wonder "House of Hammer" described it as "NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD with a touch of PHASE IV and IT'S ALIVE thrown in for good measure").



SHE SHOULD HAVE CALLED AUTOGLASS REPLACEMENT WINDSHIELDS A SCENE FROM THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE



WITH WHAT LOOKS LIKE A GIANT BOGEY STUCK UP ITS NOSE ONE OF THE LIVING DEAD IS REVEALED IN THIS SCENE FROM THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE

They visit Edna's brother-in-law only to find him messily murdered. Sergeant McCormick (Arthur Kennedy, who used to make the most money out of appearances in the likes of this) suspects our heroes, particularly as George runs a cynical trade in Black Magic paraphernalia - "It's not my fault if Christ and the Saints are out of fashion. Satan's very popular these days." Such sentiments do not endear him to McCormick, who is slightly to the right of Hanging Judge Jeffries - "You're all the same. Drugs, sex, every sort of filth."

Although their version of events doesn't find much favour with McCormick he dispatches an officer with them to the churchyard to locate Guthrie's grave. In the cemetery there's a sign whose message is ironic in view of what is to come - "This is God's acre, sacred to him. Sacred to those who rest here. Be reverent to the flowers." While they're poking around the headstones Guthrie is down in the crypt bringing corpses back to life by smearing blood on their eye-lids.

After dining on the church warden the lazarus joba lay siege to the crypt, in which our heroes have taken refuge. Their nervous systems can't be all that primitive because they can improvise tools, up-rooting headstones to use as battering rams. Heavy symbolism eh? The dead pulling up their tombstones, a resurrection out of God's hands, a retribution against mankind who were not reverent to the garden, the Earth.

Initially the cop laughs it off - "I'd love to see the Sarge when he hears about this" but when his NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD-style death for freedom fails he changes his tune, blubbering over his walkie-talkie "Sarge, there are dead people.. and they're trying to eat me.'" The obligatory hot lunch scene was obviously truncated in the version I saw, as was the corresponding one on the bowdlerised print of ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS. The British distributor has insisted that the only scene missing from the video release is about half a minute of blood pumping out of the cop's guts, but the one I saw showed evidence of being more savagely cut than that. I have it on good account that in one version, the zombies eat his eyeballs for an encore. What with this, and the general unflattering depiction of the police throughout the film, it's no wonder that James Anderton's men busted this one in Manchester - and it gives the city's morgue a bad name,too!

Now the Living Dead return their attention to the crypt and according to one critic "the sequence in the vault as the couple scramble to get their legs up a ventilation hole out of reach of the scrabbling, shuffling undead below is classically effective!" It certainly is and would seem to be the inspiration for the much-praised socko climax of Lucio Fulci's THE HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY. George and Edna discover that the Living Dead are afraid of fire and use this knowledge to escape.

After the death of the police-officer, McCormick's estimation of them sinks even lower. After an unsuccessful attempt to evade his attentions they are arrested and George is banged up in jail. He's lucky - Edna is incarcerated in a hospital full of zombies! George escapes and rescues her with fire but when the police roll up and witness him in the act of torching the hospital, McCormick dispenses instant and rough justice with his gun. He returns the credit for wrapping up the case and bringing the drop-out satanists to book, but when he gets back to his hotel room, just guess who's hiding behind the door? Meanwhile the sound-wave machine has been switched back on and its range extended - so look out!

A satisfying film but by no means a perfect one. While conceding that "Grau has grasped the essential possibilities of his theme," David Pirie in "THE VAMPIRE CINEMA" points out lapses of construction and describes the film as "certainly more opportunistic than its predecessor... and the repeated coincidences, which

always just prevent the policeman from discovering the truth strain credibility almost to breaking point" - i.e. the usual nutty premise that no-one else ever comes across the menace that the protagonist is trying to convince the authorities of, as in INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS or Larry Cohen's TV series THE INVADERS.

"House of Hammer" complains that "the homicidal babies disappear without explanation from the script." This is a rather nit-picking criticism, more justified is the complaint that "there are too many good ideas left undeveloped and in places the pacing is a little too leisurely." There is a certain self-consciousness about some of the dialogue, e.g. "We have to defend ourselves" "With what - silver bullets and a stake?" and when George tells Edna "the dead don't walk around except in very bad paperback novels" the obvious rejoinder is "...and in schlocky Italo-Spanish films." And the writer has a very curious notion of British police procedure.

Though it is understandable that they would prefer the home-grown version (Romero's), the verdict of "Cinefantastique" - "Jorge Grau joins the select group of directors whose films are to be avoided at all costs" is surely too severe. Pirie's opinion is more considered - "Films like THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE are not by any means a trite return to the SF vampire films of the fifties. By fusing the theme of contemporary social breakdown with the more Freudian and individual terror of gothic fiction, they extend the horror film into a new and more viable area that could be loosely termed The Cinema of Gothic Anxiety. The fact that this enterprising remake of Romero was a Spanish/Italian co-production suggests that the Latin cinema may be at present more prepared than its English counterpart to break away from the mundane repition of overworked themes." Well, a lot of gore has flowed under the bridge since then, and certainly this Cinema of Gothic Anxiety and its Latin practitioners have kept up a steady stream of enterprising remakes of Romero.



ONE OF THE LIVING DEAD SETS OFF FOR A SPOT OF BREAKFAST AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE

THE NUMEROUS TITLES AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE
BY GORDON FINLAYSON

NON SI DOVEVA PROFANARE IL SONNO DEI MORTI/ NO SE DEBE PROFANAR EL SUENO DE LOS MUERTOS or, to you and I, THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE. The film was first released in the USA in 1975 under the title BREAKFAST AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE. This was very quickly changed,as nobody had an appetite for the title (i.e. no-one went to see the film), to DON'T OPEN THE WINDOW...WHATEVER'S OUT THERE WILL WAIT.

In common with other DON'T films (DON'T GO IN THE HOUSE /DON'T ANSWER THE PHONE /DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT etc) the audience expects someone to do the very thing they're asked not to. This title, however has nothing to do with the film.

To capitalise on another great exploitation film the ad line from LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT was stolen ("To avoid fainting keep repeating, it's only a movie...only a movie, only a movie, only a movie.)

Not only this, but photos from SOMETHING TO HIDE were cannibalised (quite appropriate). Pictures of Peter Finch, Linda Hayden and Shelley Winters were stuck behind a cut-out window frame and used to advertise the film (It's not only the italians who steal ideas.)

THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE remains the best known title, (now shortened to THE LIVING DEAD for video release) but other countries used titles which leave the viewer in no doubt as to the kind of film he is about to see.

WEEKEND PER I MORTI/ FIN DE SEMANA PARA LOS MUERTOS (Weekend for the Dead) were early titles given to the film; LE MASSACRE DES MORTS-VIVANTS (The Massacre of the Living Dead) is French; The Germans were given a choice: INVASION DER ZOMBIES (self-explanatory) or DAS LEICHENHAUS DER LEBENDEN TOTEN (The Morgue of the Living Dead).

One title finally, evades tracking down and it is perhaps one of the quirkiest: LET SLEEPING CORPSES LIE. It would be nice to think of it having been used somewhere. Maybe, like the zombies, it will rise again!



IT'S COMPETITION TIME !

WIN a million pounds or your very own pub. Yes, that's the prize on offer in this free to enter competition. But then come to think of it what would you want with a million pounds or a pub? No let's change it to something really useful, an original cinema poster for FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 3 and just for good measure we'll throw in a poster for HALLOWEEN 3 SEASON OF THE WITCH as well.

Now that's a really useful prize and all you have to do to stand a chance of winning is to identify those two mystery pictures. We don't want the names of the stars just the film titles. Entries should be sent to the editorial address on page three to arrive no later than December 10th so that we can get the posters off to the winner in time for Christmas, who says we don't care? In the event of nobody correctly identifying both pictures the FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 3 poster will be awarded to the person who identifies the picture on the left and the HALLOWEEN 3 SEASON OF THE WITCH poster will be..... Well it's obvious isn't it so good luck and may the best man or woman (do women watch horror films? Well ladies do you?) win.Correct answers and the name of the prize winner will appear in the next issue of SAMHAIN.






THE EVIL DEAD
THIS IS THE BRIDGE WE'RE "GONNA" CROSS?
DON'T LET IT FOOL "YA"..
THIS THING IS AS SOLID AS A...
CRASH!
SLOWLY THEY MAKE THEIR WAY ACROSS THE BRIDGE UNTIL ...
THAT'S IT?
YEAH... SO GET UNPACKING.
AND THAT NIGHT...
I WOULD ER... LIKE TO PRO-POSE A TOAST
AND SUDDENLY...


WHA-WHAT DID THAT
WELL WHAT-EVER IT IS ITS STILL DOWN THERE
MAYBE IT WAS AN ANIMAL
AN ANIMAL, HA HA - THATS THE DUMBEST THING I EVER HEARD
WELL SOME-THING'S DOWN THERE
OK COWARDS I'LL LOOK
BE CARE-FULL
MINUTES PASS AND SCOTT DOESN'T RETURN SO ASH FOLLOWS HIM DOWN IN-TO THE CELLAR
SCOTTY?!!
SCOTTY WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU!?!
YAAHH!
SCOTTY FOR CHRIST'S SAKE YOU SCARED ME TO DEATH
AND...
I FOUND THIS PILE OF JUNK. GOT SOME WEIRD STUFF HERE
I SAY WE TAKE THESE BACK UP.
OKAY...er YOU TAKE THE TAPE MACHINE
LATER THAT NIGHT...
OK QUIET EVERYONE...
OK ASH SWITCH IT ON
NEXT: TREES

FREDDY AND THE FREELINGS FLOP...

BY PHILIP GODFREY

THE last few months have seen a spate of big-budget genre productions including ALIENS, DAY OF THE DEAD, HIGHLANDER and INVADERS FROM MARS. Now it doesn't take a genius to tell you three of those four were either sequels or remakes but thankfully all were highly entertaining.

However the same cannot be said for two other major genre productions released at the same time. Both sequels to first class films, POLTERGEIST II THE OTHER SIDE and A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 2 FREDDY'S REVENGE make no attempt to hide their true colours, those of shoddily made sequels aimed solely at making a quick buck from a ready-made audience eager for more of what they saw in the original films.

Not without top genre directors Tobe Hooper and Wes Craven at the respective helms the films are well-scuppered before they even hit the screens.

In both cases they have been assigned to a young director desperate for a second feature. Britain's Brian Gibson whose only previous film credit was the "New Wave" musical BREAKING GLASS, was told by a psychic in 1983 that in late 1984 he would receive a script "Out of the blue." Sure enough he did and the script was for POLTERGEIST II. Unfortunately, for his reputation, the talented director who was responsible for some of the BBC'S best drama productions including BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS, took the script.

FREDDY'S REVENGE was helmed by Jack Sholder, the man behind the cheap, trashy but thoroughly enjoyable, ALONE IN THE DARK.

What both FREDDY'S REVENGE and POLTERGEIST II have in common is that they are both perfect examples of the contempt that many Hollywood studios have for their audiences nowadays. Their thinking seems to go on the lines of: give them pretty photography, state-of-the-art special effects and a bunch of second string actors, mix with a story that was written 1-50 years ago and grab the loot before people realise they have seen it all before.

POLTERGEIST II reunites all the central characters from the first film (except Dominique Dunne of course who in real life was murdered by her boyfriend shortly after POLTERGEIST's release) together with all the psychic mumbo-jumbo and for good measure throws in a dollop of MANITOU/NIGHTWING-style Indian mysticism in the comforting shape of big Will Sampson.

It's been four years since the Freelings last turned on the TV and tuned into the other side and our all-American family are now living with gran who promptly proceeds to drop dead (they show this by freezing a shot of her sleeping) before she's even been properly introduced. What is left of their old Cuesta Verde house has been roped off and excavations have revealed yet another graveyard underneath the Indian cemetary that came to light so spectacularly at the end of POLTERGEIST. Our favourite pint-sized parapsychologist (Zelda Rubinstein) is back sniffing around predicting bad vibes and before long everyone realises that the evil spirits are back for an encore.

It transpires that this graveyard is the last resting place of a religious sect who buried themselves alive after their leader, a Jim Jones-like psychotic named Kane predicted the end of the world; they all suffocated and died underground, but now the excavations have released their spirits plunging the Freelings once again into the world of the unknown, or in this case, the other side.

Kane soon has eyes for little Carol Anne (Heather O'Rourke being terribly cute again), presumably because she has already visited the other side, and before long he is doing his malevolent best to turn Carol Anne into the late Carol Anne.

After such mayhem the lines are drawn up for a climactic battle between Kane and the combined forces of good, initially centered in the excavations under the house and finally ending up on the other side, in what is an appalling finale (in both concept and execution) not that dissimilar from the abysmal non-ending of THE FINAL CONFLICT (Omen 3).

The character of Kane is the film's only truly original idea and because of this, the only really interesting person in the movie. Wearing a 19th century person's outfit and a decidedly unfriendly smile he really looks like a walking corpse. Indeed the actor who played Kane, Julian Beck, died during the making of the film which is dedicated to both him and to the late Miss Dunne. The character of Kane is in many ways reminiscent of Robert Mitchum's psychotic preacher in NIGHT OF THE HUNTER in his ability to simultaneously attract (adults) and repel (children) those he meets. The Freeling family, however lack any real depth and consequently are little more than caricatures of their former selves. All the relationships between the family members are coated with a sickly sentimentality which soon becomes tiresome. Little Carol Anne proves particularly obnoxious, making one realise that Tobe Hooper was very astute in having her swallowed up by the box early on in POLTERGEIST.

One of POLTERGEIST's greatest strengths was its setting, a totally normal suburban environment, which the audience could readily relate to. In the sequel though this is totally ignored and the Freeling's exist in a kind of limbo it is impossible to relate to with the result that we don't really care about their predicament and the tension never really develops from the few scares provided by the big set-pieces.

The five minutes of excitement that the film does provide is scant reward for the other 85 minutes of boredom. Only two scenes of note stand out above the dross, the first comes early on with the initial appearance of Kane. He tries to abduct Carol Anne in a shopping mall after she has become temporarily separated from her mother; the scene skillfully playing upon a child's fear of being abandoned and a parent's fear of losing a child.

The second highlight occurs when Pa Freeling, on a drinking binge, swallows the worm (which happens to be possessed) at the bottom of a Tequila bottle and then proceeds to puke up a slimy monster. The scene may not be logical but it's great horror cinema and guaranteed to put anyone off Tequila.

Compared to POLTERGEIST II, FREDDY'S REVENGE is almost a masterpiece and if it wasn't just another sequel it might be regarded as a reasonable little film.

It's five years on and Nancy Thompson's house is finally sold to a family who think they are getting a bargain. If they'd bothered to watch THE AMITYVILLE HORROR or anything like it they'd have known that no such thing exists in the movies. Needless to say, before long Jessie the teenage son is having bad nightmares in which Freddy Krueger is the star turn. It gradually becomes apparent that Freddy is trying to get back into reality by possessing Jessie's body while he is asleep.

When a couple of people are murdered (slashed to death of course) Jessie gets to figuring out that he is being used for nefarious purposes and that the only way to stop Freddy is by staying awake. He eventually manages to convince his girlfriend Lisa (a strong performance by Kim Myers) of the truth of this seemingly preposterous tale and together they set about sending Fred back to Never Never Land.

The first half of the film isn't bad with the sense of unease building nicely, setting the film up, you hope, for a slam-bang horror climax. Unfortunately the plot then seems to go down the plughole and all we are left with is a series of half-linked set pieces. The main one has Freddy rampaging through Lisa's pool party, with lots of fire, explosions and splashy gore, but its all fairly pointless and doesn't advance the story. Much of the second half is just surface flash and because of this the plot gets lost and all the tension, like a bad dream, just fades away. And the obligatory post-ending, ending, is a real groaner.

The one positive aspect to the film's success is that Wes Craven has been persuaded to help out on NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3. Now if John Carpenter could do likewise with HALLOWEEN 4 we could have two genre classics in the making. After all, ALIENS showed what can be done with a sequel as rare as Wes, welcome to your nightmares.



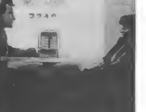


C Thomas Howell's mummy warned him about picking up strange men but, nearly asleep at the wheel on a storm-swept night in Texas (where bad stuff always happens to tourists as any horror film buff could tell you) he stops for the moody and aptly named John Ryder (Rutger Hauer).

The kid reasons that the company will help him stay awake. He's not wrong. After humming a cigarette, Ryder expresses his gratitude by intimating that he lopped the limbs off his previous ride and he's going to do the same for him. Still Batty after all these years eh? There's a pregnant pause as the kid reconsiders his position then he manages to push Ryder out of the car.

His relief as he drives off is understandable, but Ryder is so put out by his inhospitality that for the rest of the film he's turning up all over the place, framing our hero as the perpetrator of the limb-lopping and by various drastic measures (which I won't enumerate so as not to spoil your viewing pleasure, but it's bravura stuff) ensuring that with every attempt to clear his name the good guy only gets deeper.

The audacious plot unfolds with the chilling logic of a Hitchcockian nightmare - but if you're only after seeing some gore, keep your eyes on that plate of fries (what did you expect from a writer called Eric Red?).



"ONE MOVE AND I'LL BLOW YOUR ..." RUTGER HAUER (LEFT) AND C. THOMAS HOWELL IN A SCENE FROM THE HITCHER

The narrative proceeds very efficiently indeed until the end, where Eric the Red and debut director Robert Harmon seem to rather lose track of where the story is going and it winds up lost in the Texas desert (in reality California). Instead of the expected Hitchcockian explanation and wrap-up they opt to invest the antagonists with the archetypal, mythological status of Sergio Leone's westerns. The makers have themselves pointed out the western traits in their movie - the troubled stranger coming to town, everyone including the law against him, and the local girl who stands up for him (the girl in question being Jennifer Jason Leigh from EYES OF A STRANGER and the contemporary FLESH AND BLOOD, in which she again co-starred with Rutger Hauer).

In fact Ryder lashes this girl between two trucks and sits in the cab of one, revving it up, threatening to tear her limb from limb in the manner of that ol' western standby, wild horses running in opposite directions.

Shockingly the hero's intercession fails to save her from this grisly fate. This turnabout strikes a false note for two reasons. 1 - Ryder effectively blows the gaffe on himself when he has the hero hopelessly enmeshed in guilt and 2 - it seems perverse that such a feisty female, who has repeatedly stuck her neck out for the hero, should have it tore from her shoulders! Then again perhaps to so confound our expectations is exactly what Hitch would have done - at least Jennifer Leigh lasts longer than Janet Leigh did in PSYCHO. Not surprisingly, the law takes a dim view of all this, but Ryder in custody offers no justification for his motiveless malignity: One gets the impression that wild-horses, not even torments will ope' this guy's lips.

Finally there's one twist too many, steering us into the realm of legend. The object of Ryder's persecution intuits that the bogey-man will not be quelled so easily and takes off after him. He rolls up just in time to see the imposing figure of Ryder leaping out of the back of a police van presumably strewn with yet more mutilated bodies and landing on his bonnet, making explicit the film's debt to the MAD MAX road movies. Ryder loses the shoot-out just in time for the audience to still be bothered either way.

The only way that I can make sense of the terrain that THE HITCHER leads us into is by a parallel with John Carpenter's HALLOWEEN - the spectre of the irrepressible bad guy who seems strangely linked with the goodie, and who appears every time he drops off, relaxes in fact lowers his guard. If FORBIDDEN PLANET, one of Carpenter's favourite films, deals with the "Id Monster" then his HALLOWEEN and Robert Harmon's THE HITCHER are dramas of the ever-vigilante, ever-stalking punitive Super-ego (i.e. "Always let your conscience be your Michelin guide").

Which is all very well for the intellectuals but as a piece of crowd-pleasing entertainment this (anti?) climax is less than satisfying. Not up to the standard of the Coen's masterly chronicle of Texan terrors BLOOD SIMPLE, but for nine out of ten of its length THE HITCHER moves with such effortless style that it gets, inevitably, the thumbs-up



ALIENS (20th Century Fox)

James Cameron's ALIENS begins with Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) fresh out of 57 years hyper-sleep and back on Terra Firma, trying in vain to warn the authorities about the menace from space charted in Ridley Scott's 1979 ALIEN. Weaver's "Woman out of time" is an intriguing figure and I would like to have seen this theme further developed - certainly Cameron's previous hit THE TERMINATOR was, not withstanding scenes of cyborgs kicking ass, shot through with bitter-sweet nostalgia and the poignancy of a predicament very similar to Ripley's - but this is nipped in the bud in ALIENS, as Rip Van Ripley wangles the post of advisor to a military task-force sent to investigate the communication break-down with the off-world colonies on LB4 26.

The film quickly gets bogged down in tedious displays of high-tech fire-power, weapons drilling and the Starship Trooper-style camaraderie between the square-jawed space mariner - relationships examined very superficially. In Scott's film producers Walter Hill and David Giler pared down the futuristic hardware and the dialogue on board the Nostromo right down to the bone, much to the chagrin of originators O'Bannon and Shusett but this minimalist route was one of the film's strongest suits. It's far preferable to ALIENS' wise-cracking military hipsters with their jive-talking "Hey, my man, give me five, blood!" routine which soon becomes so irritating that you can't wait for Alien mandibles to squash their fat heads.

Sure enough, just as you're thinking "In space no-one can hear you yawn," they're coming out of the woodwork, slobbering maniacally. Unfortunately 1979's "Perfect organism... it's structural perfection matched only by its hostility... a survivor" is now highly vulnerable to the state-of-the-art fire-power the Marines are packing, and chitinous bits of Alien are soon flying all over the place -"Like ZULU DAWN with slime" says Cameron. Most of the Earth guys are overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers some burned by gushing Alien blood acid, but them ol' biomechanoids don't seem quite so terrifying anymore. In fact they don't even seem all that bio-mechanoidal anymore - H.R. Giger, otherwise employed on POLTERGEIST 2 (not so much a bad career move as a suicidal one) is sorely missed. Shots of space-craft taking off from sand-pits are as cheap-looking as anything in THE TERMINATOR, and the production design draws heavily from that film rather than from the wondrous Giger creations of the original.

The obligatory chest-bursting scene, such a gob-slapper in 1979, barely batted the eye-lids of the audience I was with. And though Weaver said she jumped at the chance to do the sequel because her character still had room for development, no development is evident aside from the throwaway idea that she has to face The Bogey-man again to exorcise her fears. I'm afraid it's back to running around strobing passages with a flame-thrower for her. "I guess Sigourney had a feeling of Deja Vu" said Cameron. Too true matey.

But hold on folks, Cameron and co have some new shocks up their sleeve. The cocoon scenes axed from the original are present and correct. The face-huggers, brothers of the one that locked onto John Hurt's face when he was rash enough to poke into a pod, now scuttle around, leaping at people's heads. And after another tediously boring stretch in which Cameron fails dismally to generate suspense, Ripley has to rescue the colony's sole survivor, whom she has been coaxing out of catatonia, from the Queen Alien - the gigantic booger responsible for laying all these things. Up to this point Cameron had followed Scott by showing the Aliens only in suggestive flashes, but the Big Bad Mama we get in full frontal view, and an imposing sight she is too. Peeved at Weaver for torching all the eggs she's been labouring to produce, she uproots herself and pursues our heroine (taking the lift in one supremely silly moment). Ripley is rescued in the nick of time by the arrival of the crew's "Synthetic person" in a space shuttle, whisking her off before the colony goes up in a nuclear holocaust (oh sorry, did I forget to mention the nuclear holocaust?)

Ripley, Newt the survivor and the android disembark on the mother ship and there's an acknowledgement that the android contingent has redeemed itself (This time it's a human, Burke, who's trying to get the Alien back to some Mega-corporation's weapons division, persuading Ripley to impregnate her and thus get the beastie safely through customs). In another shock moment that fell a bit flat, the android is suddenly skewered, ripped in half and thrown away by the Queen Alien, who managed to hitch a ride on the ship's hull. Ripley dons a futuristic fork-lifting suit to grapple with the Queen, a spectacul sequence in which Alien talons and typewriter carriage mouth-parts threaten Ripley before the protagonists fall into an evacuation chute. In yet another moment that is highly reminiscent of the first film, Ripley opens the hatch and the Queen is sucked out (releasing its grip on her rather than pulling her off the ladder - then she climbs up to safety against the pull of outer space. A likely story!). The plucky android torso grabs the little girl to stop her flying off. The good guys, at least various parts of them, head for home. My money's on the injured guy with the bandaged head falling prey to the cheat-bursting for ALIEN 3.

Cameron, who set-designed GALAXY OF TERROR, one of Roger Corman's deluge of ALIEN rip-offs, has cobbled together TERMINATOR visuals and the story line from RAMBO (scripted by his good self). Pacing is not one of his major talents and at around two hours the film would stand considerable pruning. As it stands, I found myself comparing parts of what I was watching unfavourably to Luigi Cozzi's CONTAMINATION. The sock 'em sock 'em finale finally makes the bumpy road that get us there worth it, but as for all those rave reviews you've been reading - forget it! It's to Cameron and Hurd's credit that they've produced a sequel to ALIEN that has an identity of its own, it's just a shame that, like Cameron's PIRANHA 2, it's not a patch on the original.

F/X MURDER BY ILLUSION (Rank)

"Nobody cares about making movies about people any more, all they care about is special effects." With that in mind it's surprising nobody has made a film about a special effects-man before but now we have one in the derivative shape of F/X MURDER BY ILLUSION.

Derivative in that it's pretty well a remake of the 1975 Sydney Pollack thriller THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR with the Robert Redford CIA researcher-role here taken by Bryan Brown as film FX man Rollie Tyler. Rollie is a SAMHAINIAN kind of guy. His walls are decorated with framed posters and stills from the likes of TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS and he himself was responsible for everything from SON OF THE SUCCUBUS to the "Never-to-be-forgotten" I DISMEMBER MAMA. But then Rollie is approached by the Justice Department who offer him 30,000 dollars to stage the fake assassination on a supergrass and that's the sort of offer Rollie can't refuse. However no sooner has he carried out the "killing" than he himself becomes the target for the real killers and that's when THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR takes over with Rollie on the run.

He is able to use his FX expertise to good effect in the finale prior to teaming up with a cop in a scene that would have been more at home at the end of a 60's bank robbery caper.

Bryan Brown (who you may remember from THE CHANT OF JIMMIE BLACKSMITH) is convincing as the hero of the piece but if somebody had to make a film about an FX man I'd rather have seen a documentary about Tom Savini.


RIPLEY (SIGOURNEY WEAVER) AND NEWT (CARRIE HENN) HAUL ASS IN ALIENS.


FX MAN ROLLIE (BRYAN BROWN) TURNS THE TABLES IN FX MURDER BY ILLUSION.



HOWLING II STIRBA WEREWOLF BITCH (Child)

If you thought Christopher Lee gave up tracking down monsters in Transylvania back in the seventies you're wrong. He's back at it again in HOWLING II one of those LIFEFORCE-type films that are so bad they are thoroughly entertaining.

Some things have changed since his Hammer days. For a start you don't kill werewolves with silver bullets anymore despite what Stephen King would have you believe. Titanium is the in-thing now and Hammer's werewolves never looked a patch on the voluptuous Sybil Danning. Incidentally if you miss her fleeting strip scene during the film you catch it again during the credits where it's repeated....17 times!

Ms. Danning plays Stirba, werewolf bitch and sister of Christopher Lee's werewolf hunting occultist, Stefan Crosco, who, together with the brother of THE HOWLING'S Dee Wallace character and a..... but hold on, this is the sort of film where you don't concern yourself with the plot (or lack of it) rather, just sit back and enjoy the visuals which range from Ms. Danning's formidable front to a gross eye-popping and gruesome Pterodactyl-like creature that French kisses some poor guy. And then horror of horrors, that truly terrifying phenomenon of our time (at least it would have been about ten years ago when it was in vogue) the punk band. The film also offers the screen's first glimpse of a werewolf threesome as part of its attempt at titillation.

Quite whether or not it is bad enough to reach cult status remains to be seen but even as we speak HOWLING III THE MARSUPIALS is in production and they should be bounding our way in the new year!

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD (Vestron)

John Russo fought long and hard for his piece of the Living Dead action after his divorce from George Romero. Dan O'Bannon is so keen to be recognised as a director that he threatens physical injury against anyone who refers to him as "a writer". Well, they blew it. RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD plays it strictly for laughs - and they run out very quickly. Maybe if you got a few beers or something down your neck, the repeated spectacle of zombies crying out for "More Brains!" will continue to crease you up, but I doubt it. I liked the split dog that came to life, but one original idea in 91 minutes is hardly enough.

The characters are miserably drawn - the punks as unbelievable as Hollywood punks always are - and the dialogue the anonymous cast is given to mouth is execrable, the black kid begins every single sentence with "What the fuck..?" In fact the swearing and nudity reek of desperation. One can only conclude that O'Bannon's successes DARK STAR, ALIEN, BLUE THUNDER even DEAD AND BURIED, etc owed more to the talents of his collaborators (Carpenter, Hill, Scott, Badham etc) than his own efforts. "Send more brains!" it would have helped.

SILVER BULLET (Cannon)

Stephen King's CYCLE OF THE WEREWOLF (a sort of year in the life of a Lycanthrope) proved to be one of the author's most unusual pieces not least thanks to the marvellous artwork of Berni Wrightson. Unfortunately the same can't be said for the big screen version SILVER BULLET now available for the small screen and directed by newcomer Daniel Attias.

The shocks are few and far between, the identity of the werewolf becomes apparent as soon as we see the Rev Lowe (Everett McGill), no reverend would ever look that satanic, not even in the movies, and the effects by Carlo Rambaldi are no better than average.

It's nice to see one of the old set of Hollywood monsters back in action (not that he's been far away in recent years) but if you want to gain maximum enjoyment from this slice of King I suggest you pick up a copy of CYCLE OF THE WEREWOLF and keep your silver bullets in their box.



WELL IT CERTAINLY AIN'T THE AVON LADY. A SCENE FROM HOUSE

HOUSE (Entertainment in Video)

Horror writer Roger Cobb (William Katt) wants to get away from it all to overcome his writer's block. And boy does he have a lot to get away from: His soap-opera star ex-wife, the mysterious disappearance of his son, plus his harrowing Vietnam experiences (mandatory subject-matter for producer Sean Cunningham's generation of film-makers). But perhaps the house of the title wasn't the ideal place to get away to, having just become vacant by virtue of his Aunt's suicide. Then there are the intrusions of his neighbours - the local fat-boy played by George Wendt from TV's CHEERS and the even greater distraction of ex-Miss World Mary Stavin tripping around in her swimsuit. When he manages to shake off these two he is greeted by a vision of his Aunt warning him that the house tricked her and it'll get him too. The "is he loopy/is he haunted?" theme is handled with rather less aplomb than in say THE SHINING or Mario Bava's SHOCK, as sharp implements are soon pursuing Roger around the house. Roger hardly bats an eye-lid at his descent into the maelstrom, which is extended by visitations from creatures that owe more to FRAGGLE ROCK than REPULSION.

Herein lies the main problem with HOUSE - it's a horror comedy that can't decide whether it wants to emphasise horror or comedy. AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON it ain't, though it does have a wise-cracking undead Vietnam Vet ("You're really pissing me off Roger" - OK I admit, I laughed) and pop songs used as an ironic commentary on the action (here rather ineptly). It's neither fish nor fowl, a ghastly monster mish-mash.

DEMONS (Avatar)

A strangely masked figure hands out tickets to a special showing of a horror film at a cinema the locals didn't even know existed and so begins Lamberto Bava's DEMONS, produced by Dario Argento. One of the most eagerly awaited horror films of the year(I think everyone I know booked the video for the day of its release) it is unfortunately a big disappointment, largely due to some abysmal acting and an at times indifferent script.

In one supremely ridiculous moment a helicopter crashes through the roof of the cinema and lands in the auditorium intact with its rotor blades still working. At this stage the cinema is choc-a-block with film-goers possessed by Demons from the film they went there to watch and the hero uses the chopper's blades to messily destroy a few of them a la DAWN OF THE DEAD. And talking of DAWN, the ending of DEMONS leaves us in no doubt as to what sort of sequel to expect as a handful of survivors whizz off in a jeep armed to the teeth and ready to deal with the Demons which have seemingly taken over the city (the film was shot in Berlin) in the short amount of time the protagonists were trapped inside the cinema.

All in all then DEMONS is a great idea, poorly executed and I for one won't be going out of my way to track down DEMONS 2 but then who knows, perhaps next time I'm at the cinema they'll come looking for me.


A
NIGHTMARE
ON ELM STREET
FREDDY'S PART 2
REVENGE
THE MAN OF YOUR DREAMS IS BACK!
AT AN
ODEON
NEAR YOU


WHO IS THIS IMPOSTER ?
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80'S FLICKS IN PIX .
AND , OF COURSE , SAM HAIN...
ALL THIS AND MUCH MUCH MORE !!!
(ON SALE JANUARY 1987)